

“Violence against women in the Muanikau circuit of the Methodist Church in Fiji : Challenges and possibilities in addressing it at the family level”

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From the author's abstract

She aims with her thesis to raise awareness of violence against women and girls as a happening on the rise in the named district. She will argue that the proper place to begin addressing this issue is still the right place referring to Proverbs 22: 6. So she starts in her first chapter to highlight definitions of violence with their categorization. Further she identifies the root causes for violence against women in the world, The Pacific and the Muanikau circuit focussing on the violence occurring in the family context. IN the second chapter Tuidrakulu likes to explore challenges faced by trying to address the issues of violence against women at family level. Chapter three should then focus on the methodology of the first chapters. And the last chapter is supposed to focus on possibilities / strategies to address the issue at family level paying attention to the different roles and parallel on congregational level as well.

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Violence and its cause – regional

1.4 Causes of violence in the Pacific (p.7)

The author withdraws her three sources of information as “Beneath Paradise” (magazine of the Pacific Women’s network against violence against women, publishing quarterly), WHO methodology used by the women’s crisis centre conducting a sample survey at PTC workshop.

- a) “Beneath Paradise” highlights the voices of women in the Pacific, who stand against violence against them. Ms Shanty Seeker shares her husband being a chef loves to cook for her, but it seems to be a crime against the culture of FSM (quoted in Thesis from Vol 2, issues 31st Oct / Dec 2014) and Lorrie Johnson-Asher with her experience of being looked down upon as being the only woman in the Parliament. (p.7f)
- b) WCC adopted research methodology of WHO and found the following results: 41% women experience physical violence of intimate partner, 20 % experience sexual violence from intimate partner, 46% experience both (www.pacifuchealthvoices.org – Fiji VAW report 2010)
- c) The author shares stories from participants of a workshop held by PTC 2015.

1.5 Violence and its Causes in Fiji

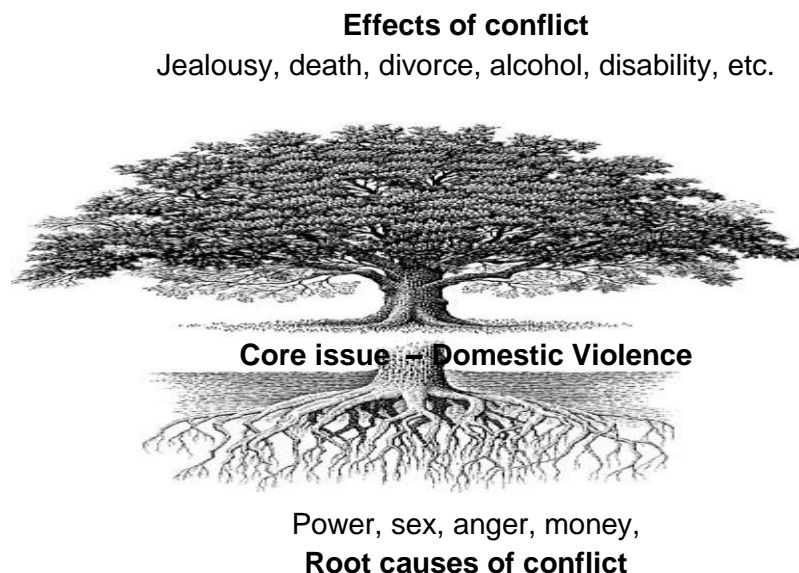
Fiji women’s crisis centre is a strong advocate against violence against women, especially taking care for victims. (p. 9)

1.6 Domestic violence and its causes in the Muanikau circuit

“Conflict Tree of Domestic violence”

It is important to distinguish between the different layers: Root causes of the conflict, core issue and effects of conflict. Root causes and effects are different and can’t be mixed.

➔ Appendix D, p. 77, quoted from Paulo Baleinakorodawa



Causes:

- a) 75 % of questioned women relate domestic violence to conflicts in the home caused by anger and uncontrolled anger the main cause of problems within families. (p. 12) There are different reason for the anger the author evaluates from her interviews – husbands not appreciating the women's hard work (in the household), health problems, women not been valued as human beings in the same image of God as men.
- b) Out of some responses of questioned men the author clarifies that their wives earnings to pay for the household can lead to arrogance and ruling the household by them which can create disagreement and therefor can cause violence then.
- c) Some responses also address that sometimes the wife is not behaving in the way the husband appreciates – different cases of women who are or are not working are shown. This includes the cleanness of the house, the time dinner is ready etc.
- d) Two women share the experience that disagreeing to have sex, because e.g. of being tired, they'd been sexual abused. It relates to not understanding the woman's hard work or difficult expectations.
- e) Men have the power to control over the family with their voice and words and sometimes hands to make decisions and rule the family.

Summary of Chapter One (p.17f.)

Summarizing the chapter the author reminds that there are different forms of violence which occur also as different forms of domestic violence (physical, emotional, economic or sexual violence). There are different causes (as mentioned above). Although the conflicts are natural, solving them in a violent way is not natural or necessary – violence comes out of the decision to control others. Family members need to try to understand each other and also understand that it is hard work to have several chores in the household.

Chapter Two: Challenges involved in trying to address violence in the family level

The author shows that because of violence, the family seems not to be a save place anymore, some youth even flee that place and prefer to sleep on the street and using their home only like a free restaurant and a hotel instead of recognizing it as a place of love and community. Family is associated with the bad outcomes of patriarchy, which has also been encouraged from the church's side. There are some problematic texts in the bible which if they are interpreted out of the context and from a narrowed point of view can be used to encourage patriarchy structures in families. Therefor The author shows the discussion on Ephesian's 5: 21-26 and Genesis 2: 23. She claims that there are these common interpretations which encourage a strong submission of wives to their husbands and some take this to live violence as a reasonable habit. Another difficulty occurs with a fast solution to address violence to encourage wives to forgive again and again and not leave the husbands although interviewed women shared that it doesn't help to

forgive the same bad again and again. The author sees a challenge to review the family as a good and safe place without violence.

Chapter three: Research design, methodology, and findings

In chapter three the author shows how she worked to develop this thesis; using different publications, interviewing people and working with questionnaires.

Chapter Four: Possibilities and strategies in addressing violence in the level of family in the circuit of Muanikau

Chapter four points out possibilities and strategies to address violence on the family level, at home and with a holistic approach. Every family member has to take responsibility in this role. It also shows the importance and responsibility of the church and congregations to include all members being a part of the body of Christ with their troubles.

4.1 Possibilities in addressing violence against women in the home

a) First the author focuses on the essential element of parenting facing violence against women in the home. Therefore she shares views of interviewed people. They observe the behaviour of parents to be copied by their children. How they treat each other their children will treat others at home. Furthermore giving children duties at home, equally boys and girls, can reduce violence because, the household chores are better distributed plus the children learn gender equality. Another key observation by PCP representatives is that often observing and judging is mixed up when parents don't call their children by name, but just stereotype them to be the "lazy" or "stupid" child. It often occurs when a child doesn't fulfill his or her duty. This is seen, but then mixed up with the judgement of the child being "Lazy" / "stupid" instead of questioning why the child didn't do the duty. Maybe the child just forgot, because he/ she was busy with other work. As it can be hurting to be addressed like that or it can even support violence. Parents should be aware of their parenting role to achieve getting the best for their children.

b) It is always possible to change and renew, if people are willing to do that. Children are witnesses of what is happening in their home. So if parents start with themselves to change, the family is the best place to start the change and children learn there. Furthermore God can be addressed with all the pain and renewal can happen through that strength.

4.2 Strategies in addressing violence in the level of family

a) Fearing God is one possible strategy as it reminds us to follow his way of acting. Furthermore it reminds us not to use hurting words and helps avoiding them in the family.

b) The author shows that respect was named as one key attitude to address violence. As respect is quoted to honor another and care about his or her rights, it is important to be lived by

parents and learnt by their children. Violence is in that perspective the unrespectful, because it doesn't care about the other's rights or honor him / her.

c) The author interprets Psalm 128: 1-6 the "Happy home of the faithful" in front of the background of parenting and every family member having a role in that happy home. The husband fears God to lead the family in a good way, the wife is valued not only for bearing children, but for everything she does and the children grow in the shadow of their parents learning from their behavior how to behave in a good way.

d) Misunderstanding is outlined as a key cause for problems. Therefore it is important to understand each other with his / her hard work and causes of conflicts, e.g. imbalance, inequality...

e) From the interviewed people and the advice of Koila Olsson she evaluates that understanding another's feeling and needs will solve the causes of sexual problems within the family.

f) Mutual understanding of all family members including children should be practiced as a secret key to become a healthy family. It doesn't mean to allow their children everything they want, but to spend quality time together, understand another and raise them in the word of God at home.

4.3 the biological and environmental factors in addressing violence against women

The author shows that there are biological and environmental factors. From the biological point of view it is important to recognize the mother's womb as the safest place to stay for the baby to grow, but whatever is done to her body will affect the newborn. The child is growing by a mixed genetic code from the parents which includes the biological order of the child. Out of the environment the child is trained to behave in a specific way, e.g. if husband doesn't treat his wife in a good way, chances are very high that the sin watches that and copies that later when he marries.

4.7 A holistic approach of nurturing begins in the home

The author shows that nurturing deals with all different features of a holistic approach and begins in the family.

a) Physically it means to supply a child with physical needs (foods, clothing, shelter), but also to include to avoid violence in form of integrating them in household chores equally.

b) Mentally she stresses the importance of education for children.

c) Socially the child has to learn friendliness and interest in others, sharing, to live healthy relationships and feel compassion with the ones suffering.

d) An spiritually the child needs to be nourished to develop a healthy soul.

e) Politically it is important that children take responsibility at home first and need to be encouraged to participate in political issues.

f) Economically the author comes from an approach which suggests equality in sharing the money, e.g. children are given the same amount for their spending in school and can learn to budget as well.

4.9 The role of congregation addressing violence against women at the level of family

a) In case of worship congregation members and not only the pastor should support victims and therefor need to be educated. Furthermore one interviewed man suggested to integrate sensitive topics, just as domestic violence, child abuse, disability, in the congregation's worship.

b) Preaching is the right place to break the silence and share the message of Christ. Prayers are an option as well.

c) The mission of the church has to be rethought to become a mission of Christ again where is room and confidence to share victim's pain and experiences.

e) Fellowship in the church is very much needed – to pray and share together as sisters and brothers, as family.

f) Ordained pastors, lay leaders and the congregation have to work close together to establish the church as a safe place for victims to share their suffering and be supported.

The author's Conclusion (p. 71-72)

“Conflict is natural because it is part of life but when conflict is not controlled, it can ends in violence. Violence is not normal/natural because it is a choice someone can take as a way of controlling the other. It can only happen if we choose it to happen.

Violence is dangerous, if it is not controlled, as it can end up in injury, death, disability, or living in fear, etc. So violence is a choice. What violence can do to us if we choose it to happen? It can dominate the other; it can also dehumanize a person or diminishes a person.

Violence cannot happen on its own, but something is happening that motivates violence in and to others. Most of the conflicts in most of the families today end in violence because of anger. Anger is an emotion just like being sad, happy and it is present in all of us because we are human beings. But when we use actions and words to hurt other people, it is violence.

Violence branded the family as not a safe place to stay, because of the violent behaviour in the home. It makes people suffers, live in fear, hurt.

Violence is a learned behaviour but it can be stopped if we choose to do the right thing in life. As stated above, conflict is natural because it is part of life. It is normal to have conflict because we are different from one another and we see things differently. Conflict is the disagreement between two people or two groups of people in terms of opinion, interest and needs. Conflict is

good because it can improve our relationships and it points to one direction; a change needs to happen. But when conflict cannot be controlled, it ends in violence.

Family is the best place to start addressing that violence against women as it is not normal. It is the right place to begin because there are two different people living in the same roof where there will be many disagreements occurring. If only parents could understand that conflict is part of life because it is embedded in any relationship. If conflict occurs, it shows that we view things differently and we need to understand what needs to be change in the family. Parents need to understand each other better.

Currently, the family has been seen as a place of violence in the home, a place of insecure and a place of mistrust. The question that I am asking, are we going to leave it the way it is? Or are we going to do something about it and make things right?

This thesis is aimed at not only highlighting what violence does to the abuser and its effects on the victims in the level of family, but it is also aimed at introducing strategies that will help in addressing violence in the level of family.

The lives of innocent children are very important, who are the eye witnesses of everything done in the family and also suffer from violence. Violence can be controlled if we know what to do about it in the level of family. Our children are our future fathers and mothers; they are our future leaders of tomorrow. They are our own images in the society and a nation as a whole. They are the gifts from God to the family, we as parents are the trustees of God's property.

As violence in the family is a learned behaviour, it can be unlearned by doing the right thing. The need to value our family once again as we try our very best to put things right and it all starts with us parents.

In my context, men always have more outside commitments then women so in addressing violence against women in the level of family; it needs the joint efforts of parents to work together in addressing this burning issue.” (p. 71f)

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